(c) the steps taken by Government for aggressive marketing of UTI schemes in order to reduce redemption pressure on the Trust?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) : (a) and (b) As at present, there is no proposal for intra-scheme merger in respect of schemes with UTI-I which manages US-64, Assured Return Schemes and SUS-99.

However, UTI-II has decided in March 2003 to merge five existing Master Equity Plans, i.e. MEP 93, MIP 94, MEP 95, MEP 96 and MEP 97 into a single scheme named as UTI-Master Equity Plan Unit Scheme (UTI-MEPUS).

(c) Assets under management of the UTI-II have fallen from Rs. 14,476 crores (as on 28th February, 2003) to Rs. 13,516 crores (as on 31st March, 2003) as per information provided by AMFI. UTI Mutual Fund is undertaking all possible measures for marketing of its schemes.

In UTI-I, US-64 holders have been given an option of exchanging their US-64 certificates for a bond to be issued by it and guranteed by the Government. These bonds will carry 6.75% p.a. tax free interest, will be freely tradable and will be redeemable after five years. Investing public have accepted these bonds in an overwhelming majority.

Dividends earned by the scheme will be passed on to the certificate holders tax free and the transactions of US-64 will be exempt from capital gains tax.

Merger of Kamraj Rural Bank with Jammu Rural Bank

*553. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD : Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Reserve Bank of India has recently issued orders asking the merger of Kamraj Rural Bank with Jammu Rural Bank;

(b) if so, whether Jammu Rural Bank Employees have threatened strike and agitation against this order as reported in media; and

(c) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH) : (a) to (c) There is no proposal for merger of Kamraz Rural Bank (KRB) with Jammu Rural Bank (JRB). However, Jammu & Kashmir Bank Ltd., (J & K Bank Ltd.), the Sponsor Bank of KRB and JRB has reported that the 16 migrant officers of KRB were proposed to be deputed to JRB under the Scheme for Inter-

bank Redeployment of staff in Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) evolved by National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) pursuant to recommendations of the Working Group on Manpower Planning in RRBs. NABARD has reported that the JRB has not agreed to the proposed deputation on account of resultant adverse impact on its financial position. The Officers' Association of JRB had also represented against the proposed deputation of migrant officers of KRB. J & K Bank Ltd., has subsequently decided that JRB will not be forced to absorb the officers of KRB on deputation.

Pipeline Project of GAIL

*554. SHRI AMAR SINGH : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM & NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) the details of the rates submitted by each company for laying of 670 Km. B. J. pipeline and the names of the companies whose rates were approved by the Gas Authority of India Limited;

(b) what are the details of orders placed with each company;

(c) whether it is a fact that the tender of one company was rejected at the trial stage and if so, on what ground it was again approved; and

(d) whether it is also a fact that rules were changed to suit the selected company which has no previous experience of this nature?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) GAIL (India) Limited (GAIL) had invited tenders for (1) procurement of line pipe and (2) laying of pipeline, for Hazira-Bijapur-Jagadishpur (HBJ) upgradation project. Tender for laying of pipeline has not been finalised and is under evaluation.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Time-schedule of Flights

*555. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for frequent changes in the time-schedule of the flights in the eastern region (including north-east) during the last three months when weather happened to be fair;

(b) the number of flights delayed or cancelled between Kolkata and Agartala, Agartala and Guwahati and Guwahati and Kolkata;

(c) what were the reasons therefor;